

# Conrad Buhrer †

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## EASTER 1937.

*And as they were afraid, and bowed down their heads to the earth, they said unto them, why seek you the living among the dead?*

(Luke xxiv/5.)

We are afraid. With heads bowed down to the earth we listen to the rumblings of hideous spectres. We look into the future with fearsome misgivings.

The whole world, it seems to us, is bent on piling up once again the means of destruction, pestilence, war.

As before 1914, so now. Armaments rising everywhere. Nations trying hard to conclude alliances, defensive ones, of course. Manoeuvring for position on the gigantic international political chessboard. Trying to outbuild each other, out-arm each other, out-finance each other, *out-last* each other.

Governments striving for peace, but impotent of achieving it. Feverishly preparing, exhorting their people to still more and heavier sacrifices in order to ward off the evil day or to be ready for it when it does come.

## Seeking among the dead!

When the great war 1914-1918 came to an end, that war that was to end war, we hoped that war among civilised Nations had come to an end, was dead.

Barely 20 years have past and we are face to face with the possibility of a war compared with which the other one was a mere pick-nick.

We all know the obscene horrors in store for us all when war comes. We all feel perhaps more than we know that precautions taken to minimise the effects of those horrors may benefit a very few, but that the gross of the population will suffer as human beings have never suffered before, bodily and mentally.

Meanwhile we are getting used to losing our finer feelings. Life has become more of a chase after individual happiness than of seeking the moral satisfaction of being of the greatest possible use to other members of the human family.

Daily Press reports of horrors like the war in Spain, the slaughter in Addis-Ababa, disasters on railways, in the air, in pits below the surface, on sea and by floods, provide us with thrilling pictures, the voluptuous feeling of a cold shudder down our spine, but, in a moment, we think and talk of other matters. Our atrophied feelings cannot cope any more with all the horrors, the sensational catastrophes which now seem to be our daily fare, and which, in days gone by, would have incensed people into a frenzy of righteousness before which Governments would have trembled and been forced to take action.

To-day, we seek among the dead! Among the gnawing fear which drives us nearly crazy when we think of the fate which awaits our children. Dread horror of "Things to come," and impotent rage and despair fill our hearts because we cannot see a way out of it all.

And yet, on Sunday we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the *Living*, the *Prince of Peace*.

Should not this Festival of *Easter*, revive our hopes and give us renewed courage to grapple with the seemingly unending terror that besets us?

True our spiritual leaders, apart from Dr. Temple Archbishop of York, have failed us lamentably. When the Archbishop of Canterbury tries to steer between Christianity and the needs of the political State and condones killing for defensive purposes, but does not state *where offensive begins and defensive ends*, he lets us down. In modern warfare, as in ancient, the best defensive action is offensive. Modern *bombers* raiding enemy towns, killing women and children and other non-combatants in order to create "the proper frame of mind which will accept terms" would do so, presumably as a purely defensive measure, on the principle of getting in the first blow.

Happily, Dr. Temple has blown the Archbishop of Canterbury's muddled thinking sky-high in his Lenten address at St. Mary Wool-nough, in London on Thursday, 18th inst. when he said that the next stage in international civilisation was to establish international law with an international authority to frame and to apply it. He continued:

"If that stage is to be reached nations must learn to accept their share in the maintenance of international law as an obligation... This involves the sacrifice of absolute national sovereignty, which is wholly incompatible with international civilisation.

It further involves the determination never to use armed force except against an attack actually delivered, or else under the sanction of the international authority.

*We must abandon all claim ever to be judge in our own cause.*

Force employed only for the maintenance of law becomes an instrument of righteousness."

I hope you will ponder and ponder *deeply* over the above *sensationally hopeful* pronouncement.

It is probably the first time in History that a *Prince of the Church* has spoken such memorable words and said what so many of us have felt all along.

And, although one Lenten-Sermon delivered in a London Church will not, of itself, suffice to banish all the portents on which our gnawing fears are based, it may, and let us all fervently hope, it will create a weapon to initiate the fight against that deadly "laissez faire, laissez aller" spirit which seems to have got hold of our Statesmen.

Let the people rally around Dr. Temple, let the world know that his views are shared by all right thinking men and women and that thus alone can *Peace* among the nations become possible in the end, and a great step forwards towards the *Living Peace* will have been made.

Let us, therefore, cease being afraid and let us raise our heads towards the *Prince of Peace* whose resurrection we celebrate this Easter Day, and whose teachings, if only we follow them, will yet lead us safely through the present dark valley of fear into the golden sunlight of *Peace*.

Kyburg.

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF US.  
Switzerland As a Military Power.

By R. G. HAVELOCK.

The fact that M. Motta, the Swiss President, has denied that Herr Hitler's recent guarantee of Swiss neutrality was in any way conditional or that a "cultural" agreement had been come to between the two nations is further evidence of that sturdy independence which has marked the Swiss character for many centuries.

It is rather a curious thing that a country whose nationals have figured prominently in most European Wars, and as mercenaries and freelancers have proved themselves to be doughty fighters, should never be seriously regarded as a military power.

"Blessed is the nation which has no history." To this may be added in these days "Blessed is the country which takes no part in the making of history," and those who know and love Switzerland will be the last to suggest that she should in any way be embroiled or induced to take up the burden of arms.

Observers are, however, not unaware that, whatever the unlikelihood of Switzerland being drawn into any dispute or conflict, she could make a very good showing if put to the test, and in her quiet way she had proved within recent years that she is taking no chances.

Switzerland is a country provided by nature with great defences and offers a terrain most unsuitable to the employment of modern engines of war. Such chinks as exist in the armour of her sierras have not been ungenerously attended to by military engineers, and it is significant that in 1933, when the subject of disarmament was still going strong, she began a programme for strengthening her defences on the German frontiers. Those who travel by the St. Gotthard tunnel can hardly have failed to notice, too, the Alpine forts which face Italy.

Switzerland is, in fact, a country which can place greater reliance on man-power than is permitted by the efforts of science to other nations. If fighting ever took place upon her borders or within her territories, the individual soldier, and not the tank or aeroplane, would be the battle unit.

Every man between the ages of 20 and 44 is bound to undergo military training and attend drill, and not more than 25 per cent. of recruits for the regular army are found unfit for service.

The rifle is the arm of Switzerland, and the training the men undergo makes them the finest marksmen in the world. In this connection there is an interesting story of a smart reply given by a soldier to the Kaiser when he visited Switzerland before the Great War.

For his benefit a shooting contest at running targets was arranged. One sergeant fired fifty rounds without a miss. Immensely impressed, the Kaiser asked to speak with the man, and said to him, "How many men can your country put into the field?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand," was the reply.

"And what would you do if I sent an army of 500,000 against you?" asked the Kaiser.

"In that case," came the reply, "we should each want two cartridges."

This story may very well be untrue, but it correctly emphasises both the pride taken in the ability of the individual soldier and the spirit with which he would fight if called upon to do

so. That very nostalgia which on occasion so adversely affected the Swiss soldier when employed in foreign armies that the songs of his native country had to be forbidden makes him a stern and uncompromising patriot and defender of his native hearth.

\* \* \*

That there should be any fighting on the waters which form part of Switzerland's frontiers is out of the question, and that Swiss navy, which is so often the occasion for humour, although it exists in the form of armed motor-boats for the suppression of smuggling, would hardly figure. But in this connection it is not unwise to recall the days when Switzerland had a formidable navy, well armed, bravely manned, and seasoned in war.

From the 13th century up to as recently as 1890, the Canton of Vaud maintained fighting ships on Lake Geneva. They were intended to defy the Italian Dukes of Savoy, and at one time this navy consisted of no less than seven ships of the line and 24 smaller vessels.

It is only to be expected of a nation living amidst great mountains that its soldiery should be well acquainted with military engineering, and the forts Switzerland owns may very well be impregnable in the hands of even small garrisons of determined men. Their gunnery is as excellent as their rifle shooting, their machine-gun corps carry out regular exercises on ski, and manoeuvres take place in areas over which no modern engine of war could travel.

(South Wales Echo and Evening Express.)

## CONRAD BUHRER †.

Conrad Buhrer, whose passing away we announced in this paper on March 13th, was a most interesting personality and a highly gifted sculptor, who had been domiciled in this country for nearly sixty years.

Mr. Buhrer first studied in Switzerland, and one of his early successes was a portrait of Gottfried Keller, the celebrated Swiss poet.

Going to Paris as a young man, he entered the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* where he worked under Mercier. It was in this town that he met, as a fellow student, the famous sculptor Sir Alfred Gilbert, whose sister he married. Mr. Buhrer came to London about 1880 and began to exhibit at the Royal Academy, and to experiment in the *cire perdue* system of bronze-casting.

Having mastered the technique of this subtle method he cast several works for his contemporaries, Lord Leighton, Sir Alfred Gilbert, Harry Bates, Lord Salisbury and J. N. Swan, which were much praised by artists and critics of the time. He also executed a statuette of the late Mme. de Bourq.

It was in the nineties that Mr. Buhrer opened a school of modelling in Chelsea which was attended by many people well-known in Society and Art. Later he concentrated on garden ornaments, figures, vases, fountains, etc.

During the last ten years he lived in Earl's Court, and notwithstanding his age and infirmities he carried on bravely, modelling medallions of various friends, and an occasional full size portrait. Until within a year or so ago he was able to play bowls, a game which he not only thoroughly enjoyed but played with a remarkable skill.

A man with long and interesting memory, Mr. Buhrer could discuss a host of personalities whom he had known in Paris and London, and his stories were always full of humour and a certain kindly human wisdom.

## WILLIAM TELL YODLE CHOIR.

In the article about the appearance of the above Choir at the Albert Hall, our correspondent ST. wrote:

"I do not know who is responsible for this splendid idea of sending this famous choir over here..."

We have in the meantime been informed that the Choir has been sent over here at the instigation of the Polytechnic Toning Association, which institution also founded the Choir and gave it its name.

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